

Remarks of Governor Haley Barbour  
“Stay Alert. Stay Alive.”  
Thursday, April 6, 2006  
Biloxi, Mississippi

I want to thank all of you who are here in Biloxi today to help kick off a hurricane awareness informational campaign we call “Stay Alert. Stay Alive.” I especially appreciate the Salvation Army for hosting us here at Yankee Stadium.

This campaign had its origins in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the worst natural disaster in American history. We hope and pray nothing like it ever happens again.

But, even as we continue to recover from Katrina, we know the 2006 hurricane season is coming. It officially starts on June 1, and national weather experts are already predicting another tough season.

The plain truth is we can pray for the best but we have to be prepared for the worst.

One of the lessons of Katrina – and there were many – is that even with all the information and assistance that is available, there really is no substitute for awareness and self-help, especially in the days before a hurricane is predicted to hit.

Advance preparation is the key.

The “Stay Alert. Stay Alive” campaign is designed to give people the information they need to make good decisions in advance of a storm so they can be prepared to successfully face whatever nature throws at us this year.

The awareness campaign is a partnership of state and local agencies, non-profit organizations and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

All of the organizations will combine their hurricane awareness efforts, experience and expertise under the overall goal that all Mississippi residents, government agencies and businesses are prepared for the 2006 season.

During the campaign the agencies and organizations will focus on a variety of preparedness themes, including family disaster plans, businesses, travel trailers, evacuation routes, volunteer efforts, insurance, health issues and mental health needs.

We’ll take the message to schools and faith-based organizations, civic clubs and community organizations, and to the general public through the media over the next eight weeks and beyond.

FEMA and the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency will also print door-hangers that FEMA Community Relations team members will place on the doors of the FEMA travel trailers and mobile homes. The door hangers feature disaster preparedness tips, remind tenants of an evacuation survey phone line and tell residents not to tow or move their travel trailers during an evacuation. These FEMA trailers must not be removed or hauled off before or during a storm; to do so is a crime.

And, today MEMA will launch an Evacuation Transportation Survey to begin to identify residents of six coastal counties who may need transportation to get out of harm's way in an emergency.

Residents of the six coastal counties will be able to call a toll-free number and tell an operator if they would need transportation during an evacuation. The phone line will be open until May 26, to help determine the need for additional public transportation during an evacuation.

The number is 1-866-647-0966 and operators will be on duty from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, and from 8 a.m. until noon on Saturdays.

Our message today is simple: Take the coming hurricane season very seriously. Plan ahead. Use the informational tools and tips that will be communicated during this effort. Preparation and self-help are essential. No one can do everything for you.

I want to be sure we are making not only extensive efforts but also extraordinary efforts to help people realize the importance of how staying alert can help them stay alive.